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JOHN RUSKIN

AND

THOUGHTS ON DEMOCRACY

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## JOHN RUSKIN

AT sunset, on the 20th January 1900, died a man who has done much for his countrymen and would fain have done more. For years and years he prophesied to us of faith and hope and charity, and of judgment to come. He kept high ideals before us; he was charitable, kind, and unselfish in his own life. Like Carlyle, his master, he hated shams: "appearances" or "custom," or "what is expected" or "what must be profitable," were excuses of no avail in his eyes. "Is the thing true?" was his test, and it



seems to me that though in applying this touchstone we shall often go wrong, such is human ignorance, we shall not be so likely to go wrong in the long run as if we took another. Like Carlyle, too, he was a great preacher, preaching to a nation that has known and required many great preachers from the days of King Alfred and of Langland until to-day. Moreover, he was a popular preacher, but he was no hireling loving to prophesy smooth things, flattering under the simulation of rebuke or craftily apologising for and cunningly glossing over mean and petty but well-cherished national sins. He was a statesman sometimes, but never a politician. It was emphatically not his humour

to worship the ugly idol of expediency, nor could he stoop to cajole fools in order to gain place or popularity. He was an intensely religious man, but he never put on the garb of a sect or pretended for a moment to share the dogmatic beliefs that are the delight of the churches, though such acquiescence would have secured him powerful sympathies for his life's work. Priding himself to be the son of an honourable merchant, his morality would never have allowed him to inform the House of Commons that "adulteration was a mere form of competition." He was not willing to tell working-men that they are wise in matters of which they are ignorant, honest when he knew that they are too

often lazy and stupid, fine fellows when they are obviously, too many of them, more drunken, brutal, and dirty than they need be: though to no man in England was the cause of the poor ever nearer, and few public men, whom we have known, have thought and worked more earnestly and usefully on behalf of those who labour with their hands or have held good handiwork in more complete respect. Like Carlyle, too, he was one of the first English thinkers to discover and expose the hopeless but most delusive fallacies of the old school of political economy, though all he got for many years in this national service was shallow mockery. But the political economy of to-day is the political economy

of John Ruskin, and not the political economy of John Bright or even of John Stuart Mill. There was a time when, as he said himself, Carlyle and he stood almost alone against a world that listened greedily to the babble of party politicians and the chatter of popular journalists, to all the meaningless, deceptive buzzing of the ephemerals, in fact. But how does it stand now? What was essential in the creed of these two teachers is now largely a matter of faith (though unhappily not always of practice) among thinking men and women wherever English is spoken. I am not claiming for John Ruskin the infallibility that belongs to no man, were he even Isaiah or Dante or Shakespeare,

but I do say this, that in the midst of an evil generation that laboured busily with the muck-rake, delighting in its filthy toil and refusing any other work, he was not content to live meanly or think meanly or act meanly; and that like Meredith (the greatest now left to us of the foremost English teachers this dying half-century has known) he never ceased to point out the evil of the headlong national pursuit of riches and rank followed to the reckless damage of body and soul, and to the callous and wanton injury of every beautiful place and beautiful thing in these islands. I confess it is this side of the man that chiefly appeals to me in his writing, though I can see perfectly well

that he was not talking idly when he complained that he was taken away from his own proper work because upon him (as upon William Morris later) it was borne in that no one but himself could or would give to his fellows the message he had learnt.

For Ruskin was both an artist and a teacher of art. His own art work was twofold: he wrought with pencil and with pen, with line and colour and with words. His drawings are always delicate and conscientious, often gently and delightfully expressive. His art criticism is admittedly of high order. In fact, he has anticipated much of the most modern æsthetic teaching now received wherever art is really followed. It is not

such a slight thing that he was able to teach himself by patient painstaking to understand and appreciate the work of a man who was neither understood nor appreciated before, though he had in highest measure the divine gift of nobly rendering natural colour and form, and of clothing his vision of reality with such a garment of glory as had never till then seemed possible or credible to an English painter. If, like all critics, Ruskin was no judge of the works of art he did not love, at least he deeply understood those that he did love. He was blind, wholly blind to the genius of Whistler, but he was also one of the first and best appreciators of one important

side at least of Turner, and though there are certain high technical qualities in Turner's work that are (as some good judges hold) even to-day insufficiently apprehended, yet there must be, as a result of Ruskin's generous partisanship, many careful students of this great artist who were first led to study his prints and pictures by reading *Modern Painters*. It was Ruskin, too, who placed the study of medieval art on its true historical basis. It was Ruskin's championship that helped the Pre-Raphaelites in their long struggle, and Ruskin's writings furnished them with a store of arguments for the positions they had taken up. His philosophy of art and ethic largely became theirs. In



the battle where Millais by his illustrations, Morris by his handicraft, Rossetti by his colour, and Swinburne by his verse overthrew the armies of the aliens, Ruskin did his allies yeoman service. That he was unable to see that beyond these men and their work there were new men and fresh possibilities to come; that he could hardly conceive a great architecture save in terms of Medieval Venetian or North French Ogivale; that he could neither appreciate "classic style" nor the imitations and paraphrases thereof—to say this is to say that he had marked and distinctive likes and dislikes, and that possessing the artistic temperament he was frankly and sharply intolerant of all that did not seem

likely to satisfy his personal ideals even in the work of those he most venerated. It is certain that Turner would have differed totally from him in his prejudiced view of the Dutch school; and a system of criticism that misunderstands and practically ignores the greatest of masters, Rembrandt and Velasquez, treats with contempt and dislike the most beautiful and most subtle developments of Japanese art, and has high praise for certain inferior artists and pictures, can never be accepted as in any way a complete view of the subject. Still few critics have had the power to transfer to others so much of the effect that a favourite work of visual art produces on themselves after prolonged and intelligent

study, as Ruskin had. He would sometimes dwell far too long and fancifully, as many of us believe, on the subject, or the ideal that was conjured up by the picture he was admiring, but he could also feel acutely the quality of the painting, the charm of the pattern, the satisfactory play of the lines, and the power of the colouring whenever the picture was of the kind he could understand. He did his best to educate his public to art, whether in this he did well or ill, who shall yet decide? It has been held by those who do not speak lightly, that to awaken any-one to the Delight of the Eye is to do him an immense service; and that even though such an one have but small art aptitudes, those

tiny aptitudes were better increased than left to diminish by disuse. The influence of Ruskin's teaching really marks the difference in English art between 1880 and 1860, and there is scarcely a street, indeed, or a house in England that does not bear some trace of Ruskin's influence.

Though Mock-Venetian has become an abomination in the dirty hands of the jerry-builder, though Postlethwaite has prattled nauseously of Botticelli and of much else, though much foolishness has been said and done by those who have made the following of Ruskin a symptom of fashion instead of a matter of conviction, though even among honest followers of the Master there has been much blind

bigotry and plenty of silly partisanship, all this does not really destroy the value of the good he has done, working at first entirely single-handed and long almost alone. We must remember, too, all that is really essential in his art-teaching has been generally absorbed; we only stop now to discuss points where we differ from it, tacitly accepting its main axioms—the necessity of sincerity, patience, observation—and agreeing implicitly with his rejection of machine-made decoration, dishonest use of material, needless ornament, useless detail, and all the fashionable falsities that can never become tolerable or even excusable to the true artist.

His own handiwork was patient, careful, minute; he was a fine

draughtsman (so fine that few, save artists, seem to me to have really appreciated the beautiful and attractive character of his most sensitive work); he had a subtle feeling for colour in itself; but he would not understand what the critics meant by "composition," and he did not try to grapple with or to comprehend the colour-problems that men like Manet and Degas have set themselves to solve as far as may be. Those natural iridescent effects for instance that Turner saw and grappled with so boldly, as Mr. Stevenson has pointed out, a whole generation before other men dreamed of trying to reproduce them, were negligible phenomena to him. He did not often care or even notice whether a picture was

“true” in colour, provided it really satisfied him in other respects, as his criticism on Turner’s water-colours plainly shows. He too often mixed ethical matters that do not concern art at all with his art criticism, always to the intense delight of the Philistines, but not to the satisfaction of the rightly-trained artist. But, apart from this acknowledged mistake, it is certain that in treating of the social aspects of art he did great service, and fearlessly and rightly took up the consideration of difficulties that had not been overcome or even fairly attacked since the days of Plato. He was often fantastically feminine, he was not seldom unduly whimsical, he was at times obstinate in his first expression of opinion. We

may freely allow all this, and yet the man was so forceful that we shall detract little from the great mass of benefit he did, and it must never be forgotten that he was the first person to convince English people, other than artists, that art is a matter of real importance, that art must above all things express the artist's real feeling, that there is no such thing as "middling well" in art, that only the human hand can produce a piece of art—all axioms, platitudes almost, now, but all condemned as absolute paradoxes when he first wrote them down.

I have said that Ruskin was a prophet—that is, in its true sense, a *forth-speaker*—a man who stood up to speak the truth as he felt it to his generation; he was also a



prophet in our common sense—a *fore-teller*. How many of the measures he recommended, when the kindly Thackeray was compelled by the angry outcry of the orthodox economists of the day to close the *Cornhill* to his articles, are now practical politics! National Education, National Hygiene, National Dealing with the housing of the poor, even National Succour for those who fall by the way in the toilsome march of the Army of Labour, National Dealing with Land, National Dealing with Trade, with Colonisation, with all the real National Interests—all these measures, so long denounced without distinction by the old sham political economy of the past, he advocated, and now they are within or at our

doors. No European statesman of this generation or the last (save perhaps Bismarck) has set out with such a programme and seen so much of it carried through in his lifetime, and this, though he was a mere private man, not in Parliament, belonging to no creed, no party, attached to no newspaper, possessing not the gift of platform oratory, loathing the demagogic arts, opposed by the idols of the day—Gladstone, Bright, Mill and Company, only welcomed by the young enthusiasts who read his books and flocked to his lectures, only appreciated by a few honest workers, such as Thomas Dixon and Charles Rowley, and supported by a few wise friends such as Carlyle. And it is this man,

laughed at for years as a sentimentalist, scorned as an idle dreamer by the "big editors," "able journalists," whom he wholly abhorred, who has proved himself almost alone in his generation a great, practical English reformer.

But Soothsayer though he essentially was, born to the office, he was also the Knight of art consecrated to the quest in which he spent most of his life. His message was delivered in the most enchanting melody. Every sentence of his best work is a beautiful morsel in itself fitted aptly and justly into the particular mosaic he is constructing. He uses that most difficult and beautiful of musical instruments known to us—the English language—with all the mastery that long and

careful self-training, that minute observance of the older masters, that an inborn sense of rhythm and an exquisite variety of expression all his own have given him. Whether he speaks of things homely and peaceful, as in his *Præterita*; or of things antique and high, as in his books on Italian and English Art; or of things deep and pathetic and sternly imminent, as in his works on Society and Economy, one cannot choose but listen to the strain, though there is in it no siren music, no wanton piping of vain musicians, but the right melody that Milton loved and used, now simple and winning as a child's talk, now high and clear and compelling as if an angel spoke. His fair, winged words catch the

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listeners up into the beautiful, wild places of the earth, lead them through the fair cities and minsters of old, waft them to the shore of the sounding, sunlit sea: and whether the seer chooses to speak of the air of the earth, of the fires of the heaven, or of the waters of the firmament, he enchants all those who hear him. Even the works and deeds of great men as he tells of them seem to glow more brightly by reason of his words.

But in the midst of his loving care for the glories of Art, and his perpetual sorrow for the fair things that he saw neglected and destroyed around him, it seemed as if he could never for an hour forget that there were possibilities of fairer things on earth in this common

world of men than any that painter or sculptor imagined. It was Ruskin's rooted belief that to bring beauty into life was the artist's supreme task. He was never tired of proclaiming that the grime and pretence and squalor, all the dull, stupid, vulgar horror of the modern city, were the results above all of ignorance and greed and lack of truth, and he never ceased to declare that it needed only the self-sacrifice and thoughtful effort of those who really loved higher things, if they would but band together against the evil that encompassed them, to bring about the Great Conversion, and make the work-a-day world we live in a place fit for human beings and happy, living things instead of allowing

it to remain the inferno that it is now to far too many of our fellow-creatures in this England of to-day.

Of all the Englishmen of this century, both rich and gifted, surely this man put his talents to the best account. His great wealth he spent wisely and generously, he sought for no base returns, he did not require or look for gratitude, he merely desired to see what he had bestowed was put to the best use. That he neither sought for nor attained selfish happiness, we know, for we know from his own lips of his frugal childhood, his solitary youth, his sad manhood, his old age darkened by the knowledge that though his teaching was a real force for good, it could scarcely be accepted before some sudden

calamity, searching and significant, should force his countrymen to pause in their blind race for wealth and to steadfastly consider other aims. But his own personal sorrows never soured him, he continued pitiful for others, grateful to his friends, steadfast in the path he had chosen to pursue.

Such a character is surely worthy of honour; above all, of the honour of patient attention. Faults, shortcomings, errors, and prejudices he had, of course—are they not set forth in his writings? But in what man of his intellectual rank are these faults so little hurtful, so easily recognised, so simply avoided? for sure as he was of the business he had to do, he lets us see everywhere in his work that these dust-



specks on the mirror are but momentary blurs in its clear reflections. Ruskin was right where most thinking men held him wrong, and only wrong where most thinking men, of his time and ours, have been right. If he was one who never faltered in his arraignment of sins and sinners, of fools and foolishness, he was not eager to quench the smoking flax, nor slow to acknowledge his own mistakes. *When he saw the multitude he pitied them,* so that he has left many behind him who bless his memory, and there are not a few to-day who have cause to deplore, full of years and full of achievement as his life has been, the death of a righteous man.

In conclusion, let me state once

more in the briefest way the central thoughts that John Ruskin, as every one of our English prophets before him, has desired to impress upon us as a nation. They have not told us to tire ourselves out in saving our own miserable souls, or even the miserable souls of other people; they have set small store by dogma; they have not tried to bind us down to rigid rules of ritual observance; they have uniformly insisted upon deeds rather than words, upon the necessity of taking the trouble to think, and upon the duty of every Englishman wholly abjuring for himself the crying national sins of cant, pharisaism, snobbishness, love of money, and the pride of stupidity; and upon the duty of every Englishman cherishing at all

costs the national virtues of fair-play, patience, courage, and perseverance. They have all seen and told us plainly that the people who possesses the greatest number of healthy, honourable, cheerful, and wise men and women is, and must be, the greatest nation on earth.

It behoves all of us to pay heed to John Ruskin's message, and especially at this hour when the outlook is by no means unclouded. If we mean to secure for our race the high and worthy future we have dreamed of, nay, if we would secure the useful and honourable position we now hold in the world, we must set our house in order while there is yet time to do so. We must forthwith determine, as we can, if we will, that we at least

will be, at any material cost, a people of truth-lovers and lie-haters, of healthy bodies and clear minds. Luck that has so long favoured us we cannot command; riches are deceitful, bravery without brains has never saved an animal, much less a nation, from extinction. As a nation, or as individuals, we can only depend, as Ruskin has warned us that we must depend, on hard-bought wisdom, and self-control, and the power that lies in strong muscles and wisely-trained brains. We are, every English soul of us (and we ought to feel that we are), in the position of the Roman of old whose paramount and perpetual duty it was to take care that his commonwealth came to no hurt. There are few of us who do not

wish to hand on this goodly heritage our forefathers' blood has bought for us unimpaired to our children, proud in the faith that they will not misuse it or waste it, but till it to the general advantage of all that is good and beautiful on earth. It is not that the path of duty, the way of the right life, is unknown to us—it is merely that it is difficult to walk in.

But it is only by the effort, strenuous, if small, of individuals each in his own sphere, that we can so forward matters that a man may come to look forward, as John Ruskin was able to do, in a full and, as he believed, a well-founded confidence, to times that we can never see, but that our efforts (feeble as they must often

be) may possibly bring nearer to our children's children, when for *Earth's severed multitudes of the Wicked and the Weary, there shall be holier reconciliation than that of the narrow home, and calm economy, where the Wicked cease—not from trouble, but from troubling—and the Weary are at rest.*

## THOUGHTS ON DEMOCRACY \*

THE classes that labour with their hands for weekly wages have now entrusted to them much of the power possessed by the Government of this country. The future of this country, and the parts of the world dependent on it, must be largely settled by the use, wise or foolish, good or evil, they will be making of this power. Their own future depends on it. If they refuse to think, if they choose to listen to fool's advice, if they do not take advantage of the opportunities they

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have for making themselves better, morally, physically, and intellectually, the world will pass them by speedily and inevitably. Goodwill is no excuse in face of facts; only good deeds will count.

Knowledge and the will to use it, and the courage and perseverance required to use it rightly, these are the necessities of progress and of well-being of any kind. Ignorance that may be felt (but that may by honest effort be destroyed) is the cause of many more of our troubles than we like to admit. Science, not Creed, is the Deliverer, if we will only take the trouble to follow it. There will be plenty of mistakes on the way, but if a man means to learn by his former mistakes, he nearly always has the



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chance, and the advance, though slow, will be continuous.

Democracy is no heaven-born institution. There is no right divine about it. Darwin has dismissed the fatal, poisonous absurdities of Rousseau to the limbo of lost rubbish. If democracy cannot do its work, it will, and must, go as other political methods and expedients have gone. If this country is not healthier, stronger, wiser, happier, and better off in the highest sense under a democracy than it was under an oligarchy, democracy will have failed, and some other plan of government will be tried, whether people like it or not. Democracy is on its trial. If it is worked by wise men and honest men, it may do well; if it is

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worked by ignorant, prejudiced, gullible, and selfish persons, it will not do well. The greatest enemy of the democracy is the lie-maker, the flatterer, and the person who tries to persuade the voter that dishonesty is not always the worst policy, and that a bit of boodle for himself cannot hurt him or anyone else. A democracy, of all governments, is the least able to afford to listen to lies, or to grow corrupt, or to remain self-indulgent or ignorant. Its stability depends upon the persons it trusts; if it trusts the wrong persons, it falls sooner or later—generally sooner.

These are commonplaces, but they are not sufficiently attended to. Democracy is a good or bad thing as they are remembered and

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attended to or not. It is worse and more unpleasant and more dangerous to be ruled by many fools than by one fool or a few fools. The tyranny of an ignorant and cowardly mob is a worse tyranny than the tyranny of an ignorant and cowardly clique or individual. Rulers are not wise by reason of their number or their poverty, or their reception of a weekly wage instead of a monthly salary or yearly income.

Again, workers are not respectable or to be considered because they work more with their hands or feet than with their brains, but because the work they do is good. If it is not good work they do, they are as unprofitable as any other wasters. A plumber is not a useful or admirable creature because he

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plumbs (if he plumbs ignorantly or dishonestly he is often either a man-slayer or a murderer), but because he plumbs well, and saves the community from danger and damp, disease, and fire and water. Makers of useless machine-made ornaments are, however "horny-handed," really "anti-social persons," baneful to the community as far as their bad work goes; more baneful, possibly, than the consumers of these bad articles, quite as baneful as the *entrepreneurs* who employ them. We "practical English" spend millions on machine-made ornaments, and so-called art which is not art. Every furniture-maker's shop is crowded with badly-made, badly-ornamented stuff which ought never to have been made, and would

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never be sold if people only took the trouble to try to understand the difference between real art and sham art; if they only knew so much as that a machine can only copy, it cannot make or create a beautiful thing at all. The hand of man, worked by the brain of man, is needed for that. A Windsor chair is an honest piece of work, acceptable; the pieces of the wretched "drawing-room suite" the women are so proud to put in their front parlours are vile to look at, and degrading to live with. The wax flowers you see in the front windows of "respectable artisans'" houses, and the detestable "painted vases" they set on their chimney-pieces, "mantels" they call them, are horrible to look at,

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and pure waste to make. They do not please the eye; they merely puff up a silly and anti-social conceit. They are symbols of snobbery. The dreadful waste on sham art and bad ornament is bad and anti-progressive. People who cheat themselves into liking, or pretending to like, bad art are blind to good art, blind to natural beauty, and cannot understand what true art is. This is a degrading state to be in for any person or set of persons.

We must not be deceived by words. We talk of "doing well" when we only mean "getting rich," which is a very different thing in many cases. The only good institutions are those that do good work; the only good work done is that which produces good results,

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whether they be direct, as the ploughman's, or navy's, or sailor's; or indirect, as the policeman, or the schoolmaster, or the teacher of good art, or the writer of books that are worth reading. A man is no better or wiser than others by reason of his position or lack of position, but by reason of his stronger body, wiser head, better skill, greater endurance, keener courage. Knowledge teaches a community to breed better children, to bring them up better, to employ them better, to encourage them to behave better, and work better, and play better, and in their turn breed children who shall have better chances than themselves—not necessarily better chances to grow rich or to become idle, but

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better chances to become honourable, wise, strong-bodied, and strong-brained able men and women. No system of government, no set of formulas, can save a state unless the people who work the system or formulas are wise and honest and healthy. A nation with too large a proportion of stunted, unhealthy, besotted, irritable, excitable, ignorant, vain, self-indulgent persons cannot endure in the world-struggle. It must and ought to be swept away, and the sooner the better. What we call Nature does not indulge in sentimental pity; she puts her failures out of their pain as quickly as she can. She does not keep idiot asylums.

In the competition for trade that



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is upon us, nay, in the very "struggle for life," we can only hold our own by greater physical and intellectual power. We must put ourselves in training; we must throw off the "anti-social" habits that hinder our efficiency; we must beware of the quack mixtures of the demagogue and the superstition-monger, and accept only what satisfies trained reason. We must put off Sentimentality, which means the wholesome feeling for humanity gone rancid and turbid and unwholesome, and is an expensive and dangerous folly. We must take deliberate and calm judgments, and we must look ahead.

The record of progress in this little book is largely the record of

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the success of men who with honest material objects worked in many ways wisely and prosperously, and made England the richest place on earth; but this is not all, it is the record also of a great sacrifice, a sacrifice of health and happiness and vitality—a needless sacrifice offered up to Mammon. The English people, never by any plague or famine or war, suffered such a deadly blow at its vitality as by the establishment of the factory system without the proper safeguards. Napoleon's wars crippled France (though not as badly as his legislation), but the factory system threatened to sap the very existence of our people, because those who could have helped it (both employers and

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employed) at that time were too greedy, too ignorant, and too callous to understand the full evil they were doing, and the governing classes above them too foolish to see that the remedy must be swiftly applied.

Ignorance and the blindness caused by greed are deadly enemies that we can only meet by knowledge and by honesty. And it must be remembered, though it is often forgotten, that the acquisition of knowledge does not mean book-learning, which is only a very little part of it. It is no good reading a book without understanding it, and no good understanding it unless one profits by it, and makes the principal or the piece of wisdom or fact a part of

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our mental store, ready for use when the proper time comes. A man may be book-learned and very ignorant.

There is a time, perhaps, when ignorance may be tolerated, but this is emphatically not the time. We have to set our house in order, as everyone knows who has a grain of sense left, but it cannot be done unless we choose the right men to do our political and economic work, trust them wisely, back them wisely, and resolve not only that the nation, but every town, every village, every workshop, and every house be made healthier, be better managed, and the causes that check progress and security be done away with. We cannot afford to sit down and rub our bellies and think how fat

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we are. Disease and crime can be tackled, and would be if we were in earnest. It requires probably less effort to keep ourselves and our children healthy and out of the dock than to save money and leave it to fools, or buy an annuity, and it is a great deal more necessary to the nation. It is not a sin to break some old Hebrew *tabu* that has no utility left in it, but it is a sin to be diseased when you can be healthy; to be ignorant when you can, at a little trouble, learn the truth of a matter; to be dishonest when you can, at the cost of a little effort, speak and act truly. Adulteration, again, is criminal and vile in all its aspects and results, and honest men will have nothing to do with it. It is

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one of the worst symptoms in the body social when adulterations and shams are tolerated. Adulteration is simply a low and vile form of larceny practised treacherously by persons who pretend to be respectable (like the bakers and brewers who poison their customers by the careless use of adulterants) upon persons who are often unable to detect or avoid the deceit and injury.

The reading of good books without thinking things out is a mere debauching amusement, and reading for pastime is not a respectable thing, when it is pushed to extremes, at all, any more than over-eating or over-drinking. The "habit of reading" is no better than the "habit of snuffing," unless

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the reading which the habitué does is good reading—reading that gives noble pleasure or that helps directly to progress, mental or physical, or trains one to practical ends. Waste of time is not only folly, but it is anti-progressive, and means degeneration, just as waste of money over bad or foolish things, or waste of work over ugly shams or false ornaments or dishonest productions of any kind.

The world is “full of a number of things,” as R. L. Stevenson says, and we have only learnt to make use of a few of these. There seem almost endless possibilities open, but they are only open to those who mean to take advantage of them, who mean to make themselves and do make themselves able

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to see the things that the ignorant and the lazy miss and always will miss. Our trade rivals have learnt all they knew till a few years ago from us—we can surely afford to take a lesson from our own ancestors; but we must be prepared to strip off prejudice and renounce hollow formulas. Even if such a sacred institution as a trades-union stands in the way of real progress, it must change or go.

Good work, not sham work; good art, not bad nor even mediocre art; good food, not the bad bread (one of the worst disgraces of this country) and the bad beer, but good bread and good beer; plain, good clothes, not “fashionably cut” shoddy; good news, not party lies and foolish flattery and idle or



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malicious gossip; real information (which need not be cheap, and cannot be easy, for knowledge is not an easy thing to get, but a hard thing both to win and hold), not chopped-up rubbish and dirty garbage; as much fresh air, and clean water, and out-of-door exercise as we can do with. These are things within our grasp, and we have not got them yet, though we have thousands of things we do not want, or really enjoy at all, but which we are fooled, or fool ourselves, into paying for through the nose. The end of work is to produce useful things, beautiful things, necessary things; but the end of life is not merely work, nor what people look for in exchange for work—riches. Riches without

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health or security, or the knowledge of how to use them, are merely a danger and a daily reproach to an individual. They are also a danger and a daily reproach when unused, ill-used, or wasted to a nation. Health and wisdom are not incompatible with wealth, but worn-out vitality and blind ignorance quite certainly are. Only the strong man armed and healthy of brain can keep his house.

Healthy people look to the future, sick people are content to linger through the day, or ready to sink into oblivion; the mark of a healthy nation is that it looks forward, prepares for the future, learns from the past, gets rid of its parasites, shakes off its social diseases, and walks resolutely in

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the service of her whom Defoe celebrated as that "Most Serene, Most Invincible, Most Illustrious Princess, REASON," and whom, long before him, Solomon, and the son of Sirach, lauded as the Chief of Things, the very emanation and breath of their God Himself.

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